

4121-175

SECTION I
AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 1, 9, and 11 as set forth below.

Please add new claim 12 presented below.

Complete Listing of the Claims

Upon entry of the present amendment, the claims will stand as follows. The following listing of the claims will replace all prior versions and listings of the claims in the present application:

1. (Currently amended) A panel element having a utilization side, a counter draw opposite the utilization side, a first longitudinal side having a tongue, a second longitudinal side which is located opposite the first longitudinal side and has a groove with a contour opposite to that of the tongue, wherein the tongue ~~having~~ has a first projection extending beyond the utilization side in a first direction parallel to the utilization side and normal to the longitudinal direction of the tongue, and said projection has a flat side facing the utilization side and extending in the first direction, wherein in the region of the counter draw, and wherein the tongue ~~having~~ has a second projection extending in the first direction, a first undercut being formed between the first projection and the second projection, the groove having a third projection extending beyond the counter draw in the first direction; and for creating a tongue and groove joint; the tongue being attached in an inclined fashion to the groove of another similar panel element and substantially on account of a rotary motion the tongue and groove joint being established by locking the tongue in the groove of the other similar panel element, wherein the ~~the~~ second projection of the tongue ~~can be~~ is locked with the third projection of the groove of the other similar panel element without clearance and a semi-plastic deformation of the second projection of the tongue ~~and/or~~ the third projection of the groove of the other similar panel occurs during locking.
2. (Previously Presented) The panel element according to claim 1, wherein the first undercut has a constriction in its opening region.
3. (Previously Presented) The panel element according to claim 1, wherein the tongue has at least one extension and/or one second undercut in the second direction normal to the utilization side.

4121-175

4. (Previously Presented) The panel element according to claim 3, wherein the first projection comprises the extension and/or the second undercut.
5. (Previously Presented) The panel element according to claim 3, wherein the first undercut and the second undercut are merged.
6. (Previously Presented) The panel element according to claim 1, wherein when the tongue is connected with the groove of another similar panel element, the tongue and groove have at least five contact points for power transmission.
7. (Previously Presented) The panel element according to claim 1, wherein the second projection of the tongue can be locked with the third projection of the groove of the other similar panel element by an audible and noticeable click.
8. (Previously Presented) The panel element according to claim 7, wherein when the tongue is connected with the groove of another similar panel element the semi-plastic deformation is at least partially reconverted.
9. (Currently amended) The panel element according to claim 1, wherein the longitudinal sides and/or the face sides are at least partially treated, ~~in particular sprayed, coated or the like,~~ with a hydrophobic agent.
10. (Previously Presented) The panel element according to claim 1, wherein glue channels form when the tongue is connected with the groove of another similar panel element.
11. (Currently amended) A-An interlocking floor system comprising at least two panel elements, wherein a panel element comprises:
 - a utilization side;
 - a counter draw side ~~positioned~~ positioned opposite the utilization side;
 - a first longitudinal side;
 - a second longitudinal side positioned opposite the first longitudinal side, wherein the first and second longitudinal sides are generally normal to the utilization and counter draw side,wherein the first longitudinal side comprises:
 - a first projection adjacent to and parallel to the utilization side and extending

4121-175

beyond both the utilization side and the counter draw side in a first direction
and where said first projection has a flat side facing the utilization side and
extending in the first direction; and

a second projection adjacent and parallel to the counter draw side, wherein the
first projection and second projection extend in a the first direction and the
first projection extends further beyond the second projection in an amount
sufficient to form a first undercut therebetween;

wherein the second longitudinal side comprises:

a second undercut adjacent and parallel to the utilization side and having a
contour corresponding to the contour of the first projection; and

a third projection that extend in a direction opposite to the first direction and is
positioned adjacent and parallel to the draw side, wherein the third projection
extends beyond both the utilization side and the counter draw side in a
sufficient amount to form a contour corresponding to the contour of the first
undercut; and

wherein a rotary motion locks the first projection of a first panel element into the second
undercut of a second panel element and locks the third projection of the second panel
element into the first undercut of the first panel element without clearance.

12. (New) The panel element according to claim 1, wherein a first region of the second
projection at the first longitudinal side has a distance from the tongue-side edge of the
utilization side which is smaller than that of a second region of the first undercut,
wherein said first region of the second projection is farther outside at the panel element
in the extension direction of the second projection than the second region of the first
undercut.

THE REMAINDER OF THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK